

15. (Unchanged) The method of claim 12, wherein:

each memory-element of the plurality of memory-elements is dynamically classifiable as currently-used and currently-unused;

allocating the select memory-element includes:

identifying one of the plurality of memory-elements that is classified as currently-unused as the select memory-element, and

classifying the select memory-element as currently-used; and

providing the received data-item includes

classifying the select memory-element as currently-unused.

REMARKS

The Office Action of October 28, 2003 has been carefully considered. Reconsideration in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-15 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Holden. Claims 1, 9 and 12 have been amended to more clearly distinguish over the cited reference. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

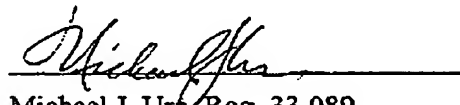
In particular, claims 1, 9 and 12 have been amended to make clear that the allocator (240) of the present invention allocated *any currently-unused* memory-element for storing a data-item from a select input-stream of a plurality of input-streams. This ability to allocate any unused memory-element for storing a data-item results in great efficiency.

The Holden reference, on the other hand, operates quite differently. In Holden, in particular Figure 5 thereof, the link list RAM determines *in advance* what memory-element a data-item from a particular stream will be stored in. Using any currently-unused memory-element, as in the present invention, would wreak havoc on the system of Holden.

Accordingly, claims 1, 9 and 12 are believed to patentably define over Holden.

Dependent claims 2-8, 10, 11 and 13-15 are also believed to add novel and patentable subject matter to their respective independent claims. Withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of claims 1-15 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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